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THE FRATRICIDE: THE CAINITE CIVILIZATION. GENESIS IV.

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The language and style of the section.—Difficulties in 4 : 17-24.—The parallel tables.—Important expressions in the biblical narrative.—The outside material.—The character and purpose of the biblical material in comparison with the outside.—The biblical material concerning the Cainite civilization.—Similar material in other literatures.—The writer's preface.

The material for our study is found in Genesis 4 : 1-26 and 5 : 29.¹ These passages describe the fratricide, the judgment of the fratricide, the beginnings of civilization in Cain's line, the sword-song of Lamech, and the expectation through Noah. This material is prophetic in its character and presents characteristics in some respects similar to those of Genesis 2 and 3.

I. We may first consider in a preliminary way some of the more important points which present themselves :

1. The language of this section abounds in words and expressions found only in the writings assigned by the analysis to the prophetic author. The list is, of necessity, omitted.

2. The style of the section permits the introduction of stories and traditions. Here belong the story of Cain and Abel, the connecting of the origin of the various arts with Cain's descendants, the introduction of Lamech's song, and the several digressions from the genealogical list. It is throughout vivid, picturesque, marked by the absence of all sameness, with a large admixture of the conversational element, the insertion of the poetical fragment, and the covering up in a large measure of the genealogical table. The anthropomorphic element is seen in the

¹ Among other references may be stated the following ; *Dods*, Genesis ; *Kalisch*, Genesis ; *Dillmann*, Die Genesis ; *Delitzsch* (*Franz*), Genesis ; *Lenormant*, Beginnings of History, chapters 4 and 5 ; *Schrader*, The Cuneiform Inscriptions and the Old Testament ; *Harper and Green*, The Pentateuchal Question, Genesis i-xii ; *Hebraica*, Volume V. ; *Ewald*, History of Israel, Volume I. ; *Budde*, *Die Biblische Urgeschichte* ; *Geikie*, Hours with the Bible, Volume I., chapters 11, 12 ; *Goldziher*, Mythology among the Hebrews ; *Smith*, Bible Dict., articles on Cain, Abel, and other names in the chapter ; *Cory*, Ancient Fragments ; *Æschylus*, Prometheus Bound, vss. 447-471.

conversation between Cain and Jehovah. The didactic element is seen in the teachings sought to be conveyed by the stories of severe punishment inflicted upon Cain and the account of the development of evil influences.

3. The passage 4 : 17-24 presents some difficulties :¹ (1) In these verses Cain is represented as an agriculturalist, and as building a city ; while the representation in 4 : 2-16 makes him an outcast from the society of men and a typical nomad. (2) The popular query as to the wife of Cain is not answered in the chapter, which, with other data, seems to point to the fact that this is a section of some different account in which the attendant circumstances also were different. (3) It is as difficult to find the men required for the building of the city (or village) as to find the woman who should serve as Cain's wife. (4) The writer in this passage seems to be explaining the origin of the civilization of his own times, and one may fairly ask the question whether this narrative presupposes on the part of its author a knowledge of the deluge.

4. One cannot fail to notice certain resemblances between the genealogy of chapter 4 and that of chapter 5. The following table seems to deserve attention :

THE GENEALOGIES IN GENESIS 4 AND 5.			
The man			Adam
	Abel	Seth.....	Seth
		Enosh.....	Enosh
Cain.....			Kenan
Enoch.....			Mahalalel
Irad.....			Jared
Mehujael.....			Enoch
Methuselah.....			Methuselah
Lamech.....			Lamech
	Noah.....	Noah	
Jabal, Jubal, Tubal.	Shem, Ham, Japheth.	Shem, Ham, Japheth.	

¹ See *Hebraica*, Vol. V., 1, pp. 32 ff.

It will be noted that the table of chapter 4 gives a list containing seven members ending in the triple division, that it also contains the three collateral names, Seth, Enosh, Noah, and a second triple division. Chapter 5 gives a list of ten members, but the three extra members are the same as the three collateral names of the other table. A comparison of the two tables shows that the names are largely the same, except that Mehujael and Enoch are transposed. The similarity appears much more clearly in the Hebrew than in the names as we have them. Other changes are Methushael to Methuselah, Mehujael to Mahalalel, Irad to Jared, Cain to Kenan. It will further be noted that it was the Enoch of Cain's line whose name was given to the first city, while the Enoch of Seth's line "walked with God." The Lamech of Cain's line had two wives, and sang the song of vengeance connected with the invention of the sword. The Lamech of Seth's line was the father who hoped from the birth of his son for consolation and rest. Lenormant in "Beginnings of History,"¹ has presented with much force and plausibility the view that, in general, the meanings of the names of one line carry with them a good signification, while those of the other convey a bad signification. This is seen especially in the case of Mehujael, which means "stricken by God," whereas the corresponding Mahalalel means "praise or glory of God."

5. The peculiar features of 5 : 29 are to be observed. Among other things we see : (1) The sudden break in the rigid style of the chapter as a whole ; (2) the use of the name "Jehovah" ; (3) the presence of ideas represented by the words "sorrow," "cursed," "repenting" ; (4) the prediction of relief ; (5) the pun on the name "Noah" (rest). These and other points which might be mentioned seem to indicate a separate origin for this verse which has been transferred from the prophetic narrative to the priestly table of chapter 5 by the editor.

II. We may now consider the story of the fratricide.

I. 4 : 1-16, *the biblical material: Cain and Abel*. (1) The word "Cain" means "possession" ; "Abel" means "son." The interpretation of Luther, in accordance with which the words

¹ Page 182, ff.

"by the help of" are omitted, furnishes an idea which is surely fanciful, namely, that Eve supposes herself to have borne the Messiah.

(2) *Their offerings to God.* These were made literally "at the end of days," which means "after a while." The word used for offering is the word which means "meal offering." Naturally Cain presents of the fruit of the ground, and Abel, of the firstlings and of the fat. Many questions present themselves, for the answers to which we have no space. Does the narrative represent the offerings as spontaneous? Why were firstlings selected? why the fat? Is it possible that this narrative is colored by the ideas which were in vogue at the time of the writer, and that, consequently, the full development of sacrifice, which seems to be presented, is something which had its origin long after, but which is here ascribed by the writer to this most early period?

(3) *The reception of the offerings.* Man is represented as allowed to sacrifice animals, although no permission has as yet been given to use their flesh for meat. The bloody sacrifice is the more pleasing to Jehovah. How was the rejection of the one and the acceptance of the other indicated? By fire from heaven as in later times, or by prosperity and peace of mind granted the offerer? It is plain from the narrative that the real occasion of the rejection of Cain's offering was the fact that he was "not doing well."

(4) *The anger of Cain.* Cain is represented as being angry with both Abel and God. The conversation between him and God is anthropomorphic in the extreme. He is told that if he "does well there will be a lifting up." This, according to some, was the lifting up of the face so that he could be ever after bright and cheerful; according to others, a lifting up of sin, that is, pardon. But "if he does not well," sin is represented as a wild beast crouching to spring. This is the meaning of the word in Arabic and in Assyrian.¹ This wild beast is eager to possess the man, and he is advised to obtain control over him.

(5) *The murder of Abel.* Cain is represented as talking the

¹ We may compare with Lenormant, "Beginnings of History," page 176, the Assyrian *Rabiç*, a class of seven demons, the strongest of the infernal spirits, and among the Arabs, the fallen angels who were cast out with Adam.

matter over with Abel. According to the Septuagint he said to him, "Let us go into the field," and when they had gone into the field he slew him.

(6) *The sentence.* Here again familiar conversation between the man and the Deity is reported, and when Cain denies that he is his brother's keeper, the answer is made from heaven, "What hast thou done? Hark! thy brother's blood is crying unto me from the ground." Then follows the curse: Cain shall be "cursed from (does it mean 'away from,' that is punishment, or 'out of?') the earth." No longer will a resting place be furnished him or fruit of the ground be given him; he shall henceforth be a fugitive and a wanderer in the earth.

(7) *The murderer's complaint.* The criminal now appreciating the great sin which he has committed cries out, "My iniquity is greater than can be forgiven." Is this the representation of the narrative? Has Cain really repented? No. A better interpretation is, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." He thinks not of the sin, but of the shame which has come upon him. He fears that those who meet him in other parts of the earth will slay him. Of whom now is he afraid? Of other members of Adam's family, of men of another race, perhaps pre-Adamites, or does "Cain's imagination people the earth with inhabitants," though none exist?

(8) *The sign given Cain.* The criminal is seemingly pardoned; at all events, seven-fold vengeance is threatened upon the man who shall touch him, and a sign is given him (we remember how frequently a sign was given in Old Testament times that an event was or was not to happen) that no one will slay him. It was not the idea of the writer that a mark was set on Cain. What kind of a mark would have protected him? would a mark not rather have injured him?

(9) *Cain's residence.* Cain goes out and dwells in the land of Nod. This is the same word that is employed above and translated "wanderer"; he dwells, therefore, in the "land of the wanderer"; the name is symbolic, there being no such land. According to the narrative, he goes out alone, and yet upon the birth of his son a city is built and the son's name given to it.

2. *The mass of outside material* which may, without question, be connected directly or indirectly with this story is very great. The reader is referred to Lenormant's "Beginnings of History,"¹ We may do no more than mention a list of topics thus connected: (1) The third month of the Babylonian calendar is the month of brick-making or city-building; the corresponding sign of the Zodiac is the Twins; and thus in a remarkable way we find associated the idea of two brothers in connection with city building.

(2) In many stories that have come down to us from antiquity there are connected the death of a human being, generally a brother, and the building of a city or temple. Here may be mentioned the death of Agamenes in connection with the building of Apollo's temple at Delphi, the death of Remus in connection with the building of Rome, the death of Olus at the dedicating of the foundations of Jupiter Capitolinus, the slaying of a virgin at the founding of Tarsus.

(3) One may also compare the slaying of the youngest of the three Corybantes by his brothers, the important part played by the fratricide in the Cabiric mysteries, the death of the child-saviour among the Pelasgians.

(4) The Phœnician cosmogony of the Sanchoniathon of Philo contains reference to the same subjects.

3. *The character and purpose* of the biblical material in comparison with this outside material may now be considered. (1) What really is the relation of the biblical story to the outside stories? Shall we say that the outside stories are derived from the biblical, and are later and deteriorated forms of the original biblical material? This cannot be shown to be true. It is equally incorrect to suppose that the biblical has been borrowed from the outside stories. It is quite certain, however, that the biblical story and the outside stories are sisters coming from a common source, this common source being naturally a true statement of the fact involved. The Hebrew writer given precious truth from on high presents that truth through a story familiar to the people. The character of the biblical as compared with

¹ Pp. 147-217.

the outside stories is seen at a glance. It is free in its form from impurity of every kind, whatever may have been the form of the story as it was known to the idolatrous ancestors of the Israelites. As we have it, the myth is gone; the exuberant polytheism is gone; all that degrades and lowers is gone. The form of the story is here, just as the rite of circumcision was retained. It is only in the form of the story that there is any resemblance, and this form has been thoroughly cleansed and purified. We may ask why God did not choose a different form that there might be no possible joining of the sacred and profane. The answer is sufficient, that God does not work in that way. One may also ask why he allowed slavery, polygamy to continue; why he allowed Abraham to adopt the language of the Canaanites, from whom he wished to keep him separate; why he adopted the same list of clean and unclean animals, as that accepted by other nations. The fact is that he built upon the material that was at hand. But one must recognize that the meaning of the story is altogether new; the transaction is recognized as a crime, and punished as a crime; there is no justification of it. It is closely connected with the first sin, indeed grows out of it. Cain is warned, but warned in vain. The real meaning of a thousand such stories, as those of Romulus and Remus, of the Cabiri, and the Corybantes would not equal in influence on human life the story of Cain and Abel as we have it in the prophetic writer. In the outside stories the murderer is too frequently deified. How striking the contrast! Still further, our story is characterized by a spirit entirely unique; it is throughout didactic and religious.

We may now ask what was the purpose of the writer as shown in this new form, meaning, and spirit? Why did our writer change so greatly the material he had at hand? Because he was moved by a desire to help his fellow men,—to show by the story of the past the enormity of sin, the unavoidable consequences which follow; because, in brief, the writer was a prophet and religious teacher, a man whose heart burned with zeal for better living, and who therefore writes this, the prophecy of the past. But whence this purpose and the skill to give it execution? If

it were merely natural genius, how explain the total absence of such genius in nations of older civilization, of loftier intellectual activity? We may not deny that there is beneath and above all this the plan and the purpose of a mighty and beneficent God.

III. *The narrative of the Cainite civilization* (Genesis 4: 17-26). As before, we may consider (1) the divisions of the biblical material.

1) *The building of a city*. Did Cain find his wife in Nod, descended from a branch of the human race distinct from Adam; did he marry a sister and thus commit incest; or did the original document of which this story is a fragment contain an account here omitted? We must adopt one of these three explanations. It should be remembered that the word "Enoch," the name of the first city, means "dedication," or "initiation." Cain becomes a city-builder. Here, evidently, is a great step forward in civilization. Does this not contradict the statement that he was to be a fugitive and a vagabond? It is to be noted, however, that the narrative did not say that he should be such all his life. To build a city requires men. Whence came these men? It must be remembered that some time may have elapsed after the statement.

2) *The beginning of cattle tending*. With Jabal is connected the beginning of cattle-tending. The word "cattle" includes, of course, cows, camels, asses. Here is an advance upon the shepherd life of Abel. With this same patriarch is connected tent-dwelling, and this suggests "migration, commerce, adventure." Whatever meaning we assign the word Jabal, it is evident that it is symbolical.

3) *The beginning of music*. With Jubal (meaning, perhaps, "producing sound") we have the beginning of instrumental music.

4) *The beginning of manufacturing bronze and iron*. With Tubalcain, meaning "spearsmith," began the age of manufactures. Our narrative makes no mention of a stone age. Are we to understand that copper and iron came at the same time, and were invented by the same man? or that the invention of one led rather to that of the other? Any attempt to connect with these

names the names of the heathen gods Apollo and Vulcan is unscientific.

5) *The beginning of polygamy.* The names of Lamech's wives mean "light" and "shadow." It is hardly possible that the host of mythological references connected with day and night are not in some way related. This is the first notice of polygamy. It is noted in order to be condemned. The whole presentation indicates that, in the writer's mind, it is a sin.

6) *The sword-song of Lamech.* This is probably the oldest piece of literature extant. It is a question whether it should be incorporated as a song of menace, in which case its idea would be "Now that I have a sword, I shall slay," etc., or as a song celebrating the invention of the sword, or as a song of triumph. Lenormant's remark may be quoted. "It breathes so decided a tone of primitive ferocity, that one would naturally put it in the mouth of a wild man, a savage of the stone age, dancing around the corpse of his victim, brandishing a bludgeon or the jaw bone of a cave bear, from which he has learned to fashion for his use a terrible weapon." The form, the mode, and the spirit breathe antiquity. It is a song of vengeance. Cain was to have been avenged seven-fold, but Lamech, in view of the invention of the sword, seventy and seven.

7) *The name of Cain's descendants to Lamech.* These have already been considered. See page 265. The remarkable similarity to the names of Seth's descendants cannot be overlooked.

2. *The outside material* for our consideration may be gathered from many quarters. We may only mention the topics under which it may be collected:

1) *Genealogical tables among Semitic nations.* It has been shown¹ that while Aryan nations have handed down primitive history in the form of myths and legends, Semitic nations have transmitted this primitive history in the form of genealogical tables. The Arabs have their genealogical series of historic and prehistoric names. The Phœnicians show the same thing in the genealogy of Sanchoniathon. It will be remembered that Ezekiel

¹ Baron D'Eckstein, the Asiatic Journal, 1855

in chapter 23 personifies thus Samaria and Jerusalem as Oholah and Oholibah.

2) *The sons of Lamech*. Passing over all that stands related to the two wives of Lamech, the work of cattle tending, the art of music, the manufacturing of bronze and iron, the sister Naamah, we may consider briefly suggestions that have been made concerning Lamech's sons. Some have proposed to treat them as a triad of divinities, but it should be remembered that while other nations ascribe the invention of arts to the gods and demigods, our writer carefully resists any such temptation and speaks only of man. Some understand them to represent castes. Here are compared the three Aryan castes, namely, the Viças or craftsmen, the Brahmins, or artists and scholars, and the Kçatriyas, or warriors. There has also been suggested a connection with the caste system found among the Babylonians. But all this is without foundation. We have here not three modes of life but two: that of the music and pastoral life and that of the smith. Others have suggested that in these names we are to find ethnic personifications, types of human figures. In this case, according to Knobel, the Canaanites represent the Mongolian or Chinese. D'Eckstein in an article already referred to, makes these remarks: "Instead of gods, the Semitics place man at the head of their genealogies. Here we do not meet with heroes, sons of gods or demigods, offshoots of the one god in so many divine manifestations; here are shepherds, patriarchs, leaders of pastoral tribes, and this pure Semitic type is used to describe all the outlying human kind. The patriarchs of this character should always be taken collectively, as standing for their actual family, the collateral branches of their kindred, or even the tribe as a whole, including servants and slaves. They figure in a double sense, as a simple unit and as a collective unit. The genealogical method is fixed among the Hebrews and Arabs." We cannot well enter into a discussion of this question. It seems probable, however, that in this way the sacred narrative represents great divisions of the human family.

3) *What now is the writer's purpose?* To show the origin of things, but something more. He is tracing the consequences

of sin. The order is clear. (1) The sin in Eden, the banishment of man, and closely following (2) the brother's quarrel, the beginning of murder, then (3) the murderer builds the first city, the seat of all that is wicked and corrupt, and through his descendants, evil in name and evil in character, come (4) the arts—with every invention a farther wandering from the primitive methods of life, (5) music, the accompaniment of a luxurious and debauched life, (6) the sword, an instrument for injury and crime. Here, too, began (7) polygamy—a thing contrary to God's will, a curse to all who practice it. (8) That terrible blood revenge, to mitigate which ancient lawgivers tried every form of legislation—the scourge of society, began likewise with Lamech, the descendant of Cain.

Our writer is tracing the development of sin, the consequences of that first story—the fall. It is the prophetic text already used in the preceding chapters, the text on which every chapter of prophetic origin is based. This is a high and noble purpose; not historical and scientific, but religious. And the purpose is executed by making use of material, the form of which was familiar to all, an important educational principle; the wrong ideas which had been connected with that form had been displaced by new ideas and thus a double end is attained. This, if our preachers would but accept it, is an important homiletical principle. For the principles of teaching and for the principles of preaching, we may well accept as guides the world's best teachers and the world's best preachers, the men of God of biblical times.